



GROUND COVER

News and Solutions from the Ground Up

DECEMBER

2011

VOLUME TWO

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Celebrate AIDS Day knowing the disease can be eliminated



**By Susan Beckett
Publisher**

This year, World AIDS Day on Thursday, Dec. 1, is different. While the goals of eradicating stigma, mobilizing

funding and promoting the importance of knowing your status and that of your partner remain, this year kicks off the campaign to get to zero new infections. The end of the AIDS epidemic is within our grasp.

A new treatment regimen has emerged

GROUNDCOVER NEWS

MISSION:

Groundcover News exists to create opportunity and a voice for low-income people while taking action to end homelessness and poverty.

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that reduces the rate of transmission by 96 percent even when no other protection is used. Of course, condom use is still prudent, but for people in relationships with great power disparity who cannot insist on a condom, this advance is remarkable.

Ever since Antiretroviral Therapy (ART) was discovered to be effective at keeping the HIV virus in check, the treatment protocol has been to delay treatment until the immune system broke down and AIDS developed.

Recent studies in Kenya demonstrated that when ART is administered at the time the HIV virus is detected, there are significant public health benefits; among them, the viral load is reduced nearly to zero, drastically reducing the chances of spreading the infection.

Another significant benefit is fewer new tuberculosis (TB) infections. (TB is the most common cause of death among people living with AIDS and becomes active in people with compromised immune systems. While one-third of the world's population carries the airborne TB infection, it is only contagious while it is active. It is walled off by healthy immune systems which is why people were sent to sanitariums replete with healthy air and good diets prior to the discovery of effective pharmaceuticals to treat TB.) TB thrives in the conditions that often accompany AIDS: Along with

the weakened immune system, there is usually a decrease in the quality of diet as the result of job loss and, in some cases, rejection by the family or community, and an increase in the amount of time spent in bed in near proximity to others in the household. An HIV-infected person on ART is likely to never develop the sicknesses associated with AIDS. They appear healthy and avoid losing their jobs and relationships. With these personal benefits, a high rate of voluntary compliance for taking the medication can be expected. Yet, major obstacles remain, funding being paramount.

Poor countries rely almost entirely on development and health programs from donor countries for the pharmaceuticals for HIV/AIDS and TB. While the drugs are supplied, only limited support for clinical staff accompanies it. Even in countries like Kenya where clinics are fully stocked with those treatments, people still have to relocate to major cities to receive treatment. Removed from their families and the healthy food available in the country, they huddle, undernourished in closely packed slums, where TB runs rampant.

Many areas do not yet receive international support and cannot offer treatment on a broad basis. The international funding of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and malaria, the source of 70 percent of

the funding for ART's and 85 percent of TB treatment, was cut in half this year, delaying until 2013 any new participants. Meanwhile, 2.7 million people are newly infected with HIV every year.

When AIDS first appeared, few resources were devoted to it and it spread widely. Over 20 years ago, the U.S. committed to treating all domestic HIV infections with the passage of the Ryan White Act, named for the teen-age boy who contracted the virus while receiving a blood transfusion for his hemophilia. Young women are now among the groups most at risk of infection. Protecting young people means starting universal treatment with ART much sooner and will be more costly in the near term but far more cost effective in the long term.

The United States' top infectious disease expert, Dr. Tony Fauci of the National Institutes of Health, recently wrote that, "For the first time in the history of HIV/AIDS, controlling and ending the pandemic are feasible." Thirty years ago we ignored the problem and it mushroomed into a worldwide epidemic. The world turned away and ignored science when the AIDS crisis first emerged — we must not fail to end it when the solutions are now in our grasp. These are difficult times to be increasing funding, but when it comes to public health, it is prudent as well as compassionate.

Letters to the Editor

Two reasons to buy Groundcover

Dear Editor,

Kudos for a wonderful newspaper! When I first bought Groundcover I did not expect to read it — I was just buying it to help (vendor) Tony out. To my pleasant surprise I discovered politically relevant articles that were well-written. Now I buy it for two reasons — to keep up with Ann Arbor's current issues as well as to support Tony.

Keep up the good work!

Lorri Coburn
Manchester

Public Policy of Deprivation?

Dear Editor,

Michigan's new GOP governor has signed into law a new, retroactive four-year lifetime limit on cash welfare payments. This typically short-sighted Republican response to economic woes will surely increase hunger, illness, and homelessness among poor people throughout the state.

Creating more deprivation in our communities is hardly the best way toward a better future for all of us.

Sincerely,

Paul Lambert
Ann Arbor

Working vehicle wanted for Groundcover News

Groundcover relies on sales at area churches and other faith organizations to help us connect with patrons during the winter. None of our current vendors has a functioning vehicle, which greatly restricts our sales range, especially on Sunday when buses start late and have reduced schedules. If you have a working vehicle to donate, please email contact@groundcovernews.com.



It's the cracks that let the light in

by Rev. Dr.
Martha Brunell
Pastor,

Bethlehem United Church of Christ

I was recently on retreat at Casa Del Sol, House of the Sun. I treasure each of my days there. This retreat house is located at Ghost Ranch, a Presbyterian Conference and Retreat Center in the high desert mountains of New Mexico, about 70 miles from Santa Fe.

The Casa is an old adobe hacienda. It is located several miles from the main ranch area, up a breathtakingly beautiful road. This is where

Georgia O'Keefe did much of her painting. Although the hacienda has been restored with love and care in recent years, it is still prone to cracks as the desert land around it shifts. I have been there twice this year. Both weeks have featured a brilliant full moon. My visits have been so well-timed. Nights are very dark at the ranch, which makes the soft moonlight even more prominent.

I have a habit of rising early in the morning there to take pictures as the sun is rising. The light wash of dawn is a surprising and beautiful visual gift for us early risers.

One morning before the sun was up over the horizon, the moon was setting to the west slightly above a portion of the hacienda. That adobe wall sports a noticeable crack just beneath the roofline. One of my favorite photos from the week features that cracked abode illuminated by the full moon as it set. The cracked abode and moonlight reminded me of a quote I tucked in my journal and brought with me on retreat. These words are credited to Canadian singer-songwriter Leonard Cohen: "There is a crack in everything; That's how the light gets in."

In a culture that prizes

perfection and self-sufficiency or the appearance of them, not much value is placed upon what is cracked. But in truth, everyone and everything has its share of cracks. If Cohen is to be believed, there is the potential of wondrous illumination in the cracked places. No doubt there are plenty of cracks in the lives, experiences, and efforts of those of us who value and tend, write for, sell, and pray over Groundcover.

Cohen's words ask us to reconsider how we view our cracks. Do we attempt to hide them or mask them with our shame? Or do we remember

the light we may see when we look at them with gentle eyes? What is broken can often be broken open into something greater.

In this time of year when many faith and wisdom traditions in northern climates have celebrations around light, I suggest we lift up the healing light that shines along the pathways of our cracks. May that light be guidance and blessing for each of us and for others through us. Thank you for the cracks you reveal that the light might shine upon us all.

Opportunities abound to volunteer for worthy causes this season



by La Shawn
Courtwright
Groundcover
Vendor

It would bring me great bliss to actually see

the numbers of people that directly reaped the benefits of so many of our community's programs. This also may give us a better sense of how to serve our people.

I think that it would make for a good contest for a change to see how many of our local merchants would take on the challenge to find ways to give back to their many consumers. That would be interesting, to see how creativeness would form itself. Who can come up with the most lucrative giving-ad.

It is a whole new way to get people to frequent their businesses. What will become of the usual Christmas advertising traditions?

There are a lot of ways to serve our community this year. Below is a list of the service opportunities I found.

ArborVitae at www.ArborWoman.com or www.annarborvitae.com; seeking receptionists and pregnancy counselors; physicians, nurses, and medical sonographers. Pearle Bernick (734)994-8863

Catholic Social Services of Washtenaw County at www.csswashtenaw.org; needs assistance with games, arts, crafts, trivia, reading, exercise, music, individual attention to members, serving lunch, childcare, and maintaining outside of facilities, along with personal care items for all ages, babies to adults, and non perishable

foods. Jan Wisniewski (734) 971-9781

Community Action Network at www.hvcn.org/info/can/canhikone.htm; needs mentors, tutors, and positive role models for youth. Aaron Pressel at hikonedirector@gmail.com

Food Gatherers Community Kitchen at <http://foodgatherers.org/volunteer.htm>; needs help managing inventory, sorting produce and canned goods, packing food orders, and repackaging bulk foods. Volunteer@foodgatherers.org or (734) 761-2796

Friends In Deed at www.friendindeed.info; needs furniture delivery drivers, lifters, carwash volunteers, phone intake helpers, and appliance and home repair experts. Stormy Lloyd (734) 485-7658

Interfaith Hospitality Network-Alpha House at www.alphahouse-ihn.org; needs folks to cook meals, donate supplies, and assist the staff as needed. Lindy Gill at lgill@alphahouse-ihn.org or Mary Kate O'Meara at mcomera@hotmail.com

The Shelter Association of Washtenaw County at www.annarborshelter.org; needs assistance checking clients in and serving breakfast. Rosangel Cruz (734) 662-2829 ext.226 or volunteers@ewashtenaw.org

SOS Community Services at www.soscs.org; needs help tutoring 7-12 year olds, landscaping, preparing mailings, and painting. volunteer@soscs.org or (734) 961-1210

Ten Thousand Villages at www.annarbor.tenthousandvillages.com; is looking for sales clerks, managers, carpenters and janitors. Charisse Elkins at villagesaa@hotmail.com

United 2 Heal at www.united2heal.org; needs volunteers to sort and inventory medical supplies. Luke Sullivan at sullival@umich.edu (616) 745-5134

VA Ann Arbor Health Care System at www.va.gov; seeks volunteers for palliative care, administrative/clerical tasks, chapel escort, volunteer ambassador, van drivers for Toledo and Grand Rapids, guest services, patient sitter, exercise leader. Beverly Lenesi at Beverly_lenesi@med.va.gov or Mary Bailey (734) 747-8363

Meals on Wheels at <http://www.med.umich.edu/aamealsonwheels>; needs people to deliver meals to and socialize with homebound Ann Arbor area residents. Rhonda Rogowski (734)998-6686 or aamealsonwheels@umich.edu

Neighborhood Senior Services at www.nssweb.org; needs help with medical transportation drivers, senior companions, on-call ramp assistants, group ramp module building project. Katie Olex at kolex@nssweb.org (734) 712-7259

The Neutral Zone at www.neutral-zone.org; looking for help mentoring in visual arts, music performance and technology, literary arts and community leadership programs for high school age teens. Rebecca Bowman at rebecca@neutral-zone.org

Ozone House at www.ozonehouse.org; needs crisis hot line

counselors. Michelle Jones (734)662-2265

Salvation Army at www.salvationarmyusa.org; needs volunteers for Christmas distribution, organizers, data entry, kitchen, coordinator, office assistant, pantry worker, quilters, corps yard and building project helpers, Veterans Haven of Hope shelter volunteers. Deborah Molitor at deborah_molitor@usc.salvationarmy.org

There are a lot of opportunities to give a little of yourself and your time right here in Washtenaw County.

I hope that this will get the people who are asking for help and the people who need the help, well on the way to a "Merry Christmas."

May all have a safe and prosperous New Year. Thanks to all of the people who continue to support Groundcover News and to those who sell the paper and contribute to our continuing growth!

Food Gatherers, IHN at Alpha House, Ozone House, the Shelter Association & SOS Community Services would like to remind you to

Hurry....

Last year more than 10,000 Michigan donors took advantage of the Michigan Income Tax Credit.

Make a donation to qualified Michigan shelter and food non-profits by December 31, 2011 to claim 50% of your donation.

Contact your local food bank or shelter to learn more.

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Vendor spotlight on David "Mo" Slater



by Rissa Haynes
Groundcover Vendor

What's the newest Library news on the streets downtown? At his request, they call him "MO!"

"Just think of Mo-hawk, Mo-tattoos, Mo-money!" says David "Mo" Slater. He is a newcomer to Ann Arbor, but a veteran of the streets. He's been out on the streets since the age of 15. Now 24, he says he has managed to live through some of the worst conditions imaginable.

Mo is in Ann Arbor, usually by the Downtown Ann Arbor Library on Fifth Street, selling Groundcover News. He's a live wire, from the state of Montana, via Flint and Northville, Mich. He was lured to Michigan by an internet friend who promised housing, but was then betrayed and abandoned after getting a bus to Flint. By bicycle he ventured out to find a home. While in Northville, he was directed to Ann Arbor, where he was able to establish a "great relationship" with a couple who are also Groundcover News vendors and struggling themselves. The three of them are pooling their limited resources to make ends meet from day-to-day.

Quoting and rendering his imitation of Bob Marley, Mo believes, "Everything will be alright." He says he has already overcome a meth addiction and has been clean for four years. He is now in pursuit of establishing his own tattoo business. Even though he was forced to leave his art supplies and portfolio in



Vendor David "Mo" Slater, who can be found by the Ann Arbor Downtown Library.

Montana, he calls himself an artist who paints and writes. Mo plans to get a degree from Washtenaw Community College in Graphic Arts and Business Management while selling Groundcover News.

Mo loves to sell Groundcover because he gets to interact with so many people. He loves to talk and greet people, but he hates to be ignored. With his winning personality and approach, he says deserves at least an acknowledgement. He doesn't mind not selling a paper. He believes the paper will sell eventually and he is persistent.

December Calendar of Events

December 1, HARC Wine Cellar Fundraiser, 5:30 p.m., at Metal, 220 Felch St.

Commemorate World AIDS Day and support local HIV/AIDS. Tasting of holiday wines supplied by Everyday Wines, appetizers, European style chocolates, and live jazz performed by the Jesse Kramer Trio. Tickets: \$50 in advance or \$60 at the door. RSVP at hivaidresource.org/winecellar.

December 1 - 3, 7:00 p.m. - 9:30 p.m., "Bare," Walgreen Drama Center, Studio One (1226 Murfin Drive - North Campus)

A play in which a group of high school seniors at a Catholic boarding school faces issues of sexuality and personal identity. As they struggle to come to terms with who they are, and who the world thinks they should be, they seek answers from their Church, their friends, and ultimately, from within themselves. Its rich, vibrant score draws on many styles of contemporary music. Free.

December 1-8, EPIDEMIC: TB in the Global Community

is a free educational photo-journalism exhibit that displays the work of award-winning photographer David Rockkind. His photographs depict people with TB, the leading cause of death among those with HIV/AIDS worldwide, in a variety of settings.

December 2, Getting to Zero: How Youth Can Stop, HIV/AIDS 4 p.m.

Music, slam poetry, stories from positive speakers, as well as a performance by the Corner Health Centers Theatre Troupe on relationships and HIV/AIDS. All teenagers are encouraged to showcase their talents at this event through music, slam poetry, photography, or personal stories. HIV/AIDS Resource Center and Corner Health, 591 Armstrong Dr., Ypsilanti.

December 3, 4:15 p.m. 5K run/walk, Holiday Hustle, Monument Park, Downtown Dexter, Mi. \$5 entry fee and canned goods donated to Dexter charities. events@runningfit.com, or call 734-929-9027 Online Registration Available at www.runholiday5k.com

December 6, Screening of, "Untitled" 6:30 p.m.

"Untitled" is a non-linear montage of archival and pop footage recalling the passionate activism sparked by the early years of the AIDS crisis. Spectrum Center, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. 734-763-4186

December 12th - 23rd, Main Street Area Association.

Participating businesses will be donating a percentage of sales, a dollar amount per sale or will be collecting customer donations benefiting one of the participating 12 local nonprofits on each of the 12 days. Visit www.visitannarbor.org for participating businesses and nonprofits.

Food and Fund drives for Food Gatherers

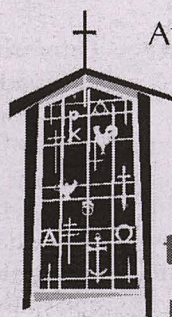
December 7-11, Kroger, Rockin' for the Hungry, broadcast live by Ann Arbor's 107one FM, Wed-Sat 6 a.m.-7 p.m. and Sun 11 a.m.-4 p.m. at the South Maple Kroger's. Shoppers can donate at any Washtenaw County Kroger cash register.

December 11, Rockin' for the Hungry

Afterglow party featuring Dale Earnhardt, Jr., 5:30 - 7:30 p.m., Wolverine Brewery, 2019 W. Stadium. \$5 donation to Food Gatherers plus a non-perishable food donation for entry, slice of pizza and hot cider.

December 14-January 12, Food Gatherers Fund Drive Whole Foods Market,

West Washtenaw Avenue. Shoppers can donate at cash registers.



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The crime of being in debt is a crime against the poor

by Susan Beckett
Publisher

Editor's note: This is part one of a two-part series. Part Two will run in the January, 2012 issue.

Many of those who settled our country were escaping debtors' prisons in England and an intentional decision to avoid such an institution was made when our nation was established. Yet, we are again imprisoning people for the crime of indebtedness.

Being poor is actually very expensive. Many homeless people have the same bills as housed people; they just are no longer receiving the use of those assets and services while they pay for them. What are common expenses of being unhoused? Storage units, cell phones, child support, unpaid traffic or parking tickets, driver responsibility fees, unpaid utility and credit card bills, alimony, court costs, victim restitution, student loans, life insurance, bank fees (check cashing, money orders, account fees, payday loans and interest), batteries for flashlights or heaters, propane, bottled water, clothes, food, and hotels for the bitterest nights.

For a deeper understanding of the underlying issue, real life examples from people living in Washtenaw County are presented below, though the names have been changed to protect their privacy. These people relocated or returned to this area with their indebtedness in tow. The Washtenaw County court system is quite enlightened with regard to defendant's ability to pay but they are powerless to intervene on judgments from other court systems. If other jurisdictions displayed the same compassion and wisdom as our courts, these people could get on with the daunting but possible task of rebuilding their lives.

David's life took a dramatic turn for the worse when he and his wife separated. Devastated, he walked away with nothing. Depression took hold and he soon lost his job, yet he was still responsible for their home and utility payments. When he tried to file for benefits like food stamps and assistance, he learned his wife already had and since their divorce was not final, he was ineligible to file separately. He is living in a tent and trying to find steady work again but is already amassing utility late fees.

Daniel has been jailed for 16 out of the last 24 months despite committing no crimes. He had numerous problems with the law as a teen and was convicted of a couple of misdemeanors, driving with a suspended license and aggravated assault. Each court

appearance resulted in fines, court costs and sometimes restitution in addition to jail time, leaving him owing \$5,900 to the court. He is in his early 20's and has no family to help him.

Failing to pay court costs is a criminal offense, so he is repeatedly jailed for failure to pay. Every day served in jail

"Where justice is denied, where poverty is enforced, where ignorance prevails, and where any one class is made to feel that society is an organized conspiracy to oppress, rob and degrade them, neither persons nor property will be safe."

— Frederick Douglass

in Oakland County counts toward \$10 of payment. He is jailed for 30 to 90 days, released, and then picked up again in a month or two for failure to pay. It is very difficult to get a job with his background. Of course, each time he is picked up for failure to pay, he has a new court appearance and new court costs. The court appointed public defender fee generally adds \$450 to his bill.

In a late development to this story, David found a sympathetic judge the last time he appeared for failure to pay. Once his story was corroborated, the judge cut his fines in half and changed the failure-to-pay terms from criminal to civil. While his wages can be garnished, he will no longer be imprisoned if he is unable to pay his fines. He now thinks he can start to move forward.

Tracy is an intelligent, educated professional whose circumstances changed dramatically when a disease attacked her muscles and left her crippled. Determined to regain her mobility and lifestyle, she embarked on an aggressive course of treatments and physical therapy. Once her short term disability benefits ran out, a downward spiral ensued.

Conventional medicine failed her and the alternatives that were helping were not covered by insurance. Disability payments were insufficient to cover them. Unable to drive or step up onto a bus, she resorted to expensive cab rides. Once her savings were eroded, Tracy juggled her bill payments to stretch her money until the next payment came in. Her condition eventually improved to the point she could drive but by

then her driver's license had expired; she owed money to everyone and had exhausted the resources of her relatives. She was still unable to work though she received long term disability.

While driving to a therapy appointment, she was stopped and charged with driving without a valid license, insurance or registration, which were some of the bills she postponed paying in favor of rent, food and utilities. As she couldn't pay her fines, she was put on payment plans of \$10 - \$25 per month.

Occasionally, an unexpected expense would arise and she couldn't manage a payment on time. Each late payment

was assessed a "driver responsibility fee" and she was put on a payment plan for each of those. Sometimes she takes out payday loans so she can make the payment on time, even though the fees for such loans translate into interest rates of several hundred percent. She works hard every day and is still struggling to pay all her fines but hasn't managed to do that, maintain an apartment and save up enough to renew her driver's license and insurance, exposing her to the risk of yet more fines.

Jordan ran a furniture business that had been in the family for more than 100 years. After raising their children, he and his wife divorced amicably and he became serious with another woman. He bought land and began constructing a house for them when the housing bubble was at its peak, using his existing house as collateral. The relationship ended, the housing bubble broke and the recession choked off credit. The business faltered and Jordan opted to just close it up. He no longer had income to make the house payments and lost both pieces of property. Despite many skills and a storage locker full of woodworking tools, he has not been able to find a regular job and has accepted that no one is looking to hire an aging baby boomer. Personal values stop him from accepting benefits, so he uses his investment earnings to pay for his storage locker and buy health insurance and personal items. Living in a tent with no cooking facilities, he does rely on community meals for sustenance. As compensation, he spends a vast amount of time volunteering around the community, which he finds very satisfying.

Sara's car broke down when she did not have the means to fix it. As she worked, saving for the repair, the car was ticketed several times. She finally got the starter replaced and moved the vehicle despite her fear that the remaining radiator leak might result in permanent damage to the car. While she scraped together funds to fix the radiator, the car was towed, despite her note explaining the car was not abandoned and she had left it parked in a spot with no posted restrictions. She is now accumulating towing and storage fees in addition to the cost of replacing the radiator. She already juggles her regular bills for a storage locker, cell phone and car insurance while she struggles to save enough to rent a room, at least for the winter. She tried to open a bank account to protect her money while she saved but was told the minimum deposit to avoid fees was \$100, more than she could manage.

For Tonya, the real trouble began when she got involved with the courts. A disorderly conduct charge landed her in jail because she could not afford bail. Staying there would cost her custody of her child, her job, and ultimately her apartment. She saw no alternative but to plead guilty and accept the fines which were structured on a payment plan in accordance with her current income and expenses. She subsequently lost her job and was unable to pay the remaining \$35 in fines. A felony warrant was issued for her arrest for non-payment, a parole violation. She has not been able to get a good job since she can no longer pass the background check. She is afraid to return to the area to try to settle the matter, as in her experience, they are likely to throw her in jail and keep her there unless she can pay a large fine, which would again put her child in jeopardy.

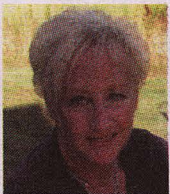
So why do the courts impose impossible conditions on people that predispose them to homelessness and repeated incarcerations? Victims and lawyers have both asserted that some court systems rely on fines to fund judicial budget shortfalls. Often, the threat of jail extorts money from family and friends, or ill-advised payday loans.

Jails and prisons are important to the local economies of some communities.

These assertions were backed up in a class action court case against the city of Gulfport, Mississippi in 2005, which challenged the lawfulness of arresting and jailing people for non-payment of fines, regardless of their circumstances or ability to pay.

Read Part Two next month for the rest of the story

Rock steady art inspires peace, harmony and patience



by Laurie Lounsbury
Editor

When you see the phrase, "Jerry Mack rocks," in print, you might logically think it's a reference to Jerry Mack and the Terraplanes, a rocking rhythm and blues band that's a perennial favorite in Ann Arbor.

But you'd be wrong. "Jerry Mack rocks" also refers to the rocks Jerry Mack balances in artistic formations along the banks of the Huron River.

Rock Steady is the name of Mack's artistic venue, and his work can often be seen along the river's edge at Barton Pond, where he carefully stacks rocks as high as six feet into the air. Typically, each rock formation has six rocks in it and they are balanced according to their weight and shape.

"I usually try to make it six levels, which is the number of Bodhi levels you go through to reach enlightenment in Buddhism," Mack said.

Not one to take the path of least

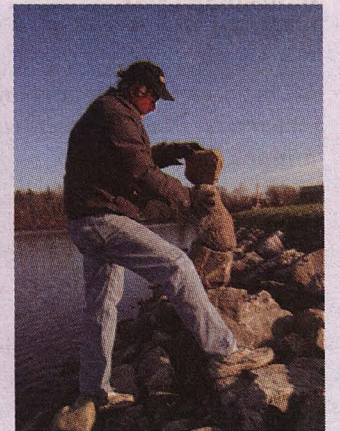
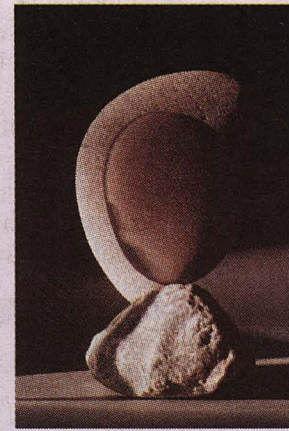
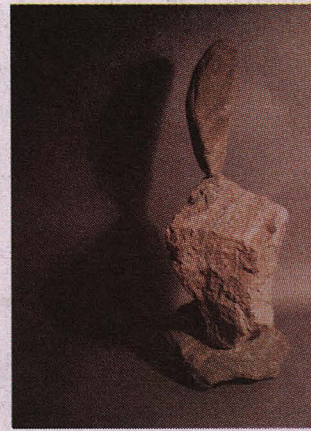
resistance, Mack studies the rocks he's using to find the perfect balance points. "It's what I call rock steady, when it rests on three balance points and the rock below supports the rock above the middle rock," Mack explained. "It's all about mass and gravity."

Mack started balancing rocks in northern Michigan, when he would collect interesting rocks during the days along Lake Michigan and then spend the evenings sitting at a picnic table and trying to balance them.

"The real satisfaction to me is that I'm creating something out of the ordinary and it challenges people's perception of rocks," Mack said. "Mostly, people see rocks lying on the ground, part of the typical landscape, and then it changes."

Mack also finds pleasure in the balancing process. "Peace and serenity come later; during the building process it's about overcoming the challenge of a difficult situation."

When mass and gravity are part of an artistic process, the artist has to be ready for the inevitable act of gravity when perfect balance isn't achieved.



From left: Everyday Michigan rocks become an artistic statement when chosen for shape and balancing capabilities, then photographed indoors with natural sunlight; Jerry Mack puts the capstone on a rocky sculpture by the Huron River.

"The unsteadiness of the formation when it's not in balance makes me feel like I'm working with a wild animal that's sedated," Mack said. "It moves slowly, but you can get hurt if you don't get out of the way pretty quickly." The risk factor is ever-present, but not a deterrent for Mack.

Building the balanced rock formations is just the first step in the mixed media art process Mack pursues. After spending hours getting multiple arrangements of rocks to balance, he

then picks up his camera and photographs his work before a strong wind or storm knocks the sculptures to the ground.

Mack does outdoor photography for his large pieces, and takes smaller rocks indoors to be photographed near windows where the sunlight adds to the natural allure of the arrangements.

A full slideshow of Mack's work can be found at: www.terraplanes.net and then clicking on the "Rock Steady" link.

Staying healthy during the holidays

by Sarah H. Arshad
Groundcover Contributor

I know from personal experience: December is a terrible month for my health. The end of the year is synonymous with sugary temptations and barriers to exercise, which inspire most to try to start January on a different note. But before we turn to New Year's Resolutions, let's try to make sure we end this year in style and in shape.


Eating right. We all know what we're supposed to eat, but it's following guidelines that proves exceptionally difficult. First, work on writing down everything you eat. We often overeat at meals when we're no longer hungry, or snack in between from boredom without thinking about the calories we consume. Forcing yourself to write everything down will increase your awareness of the food you put into your body.

Goals. Next, I recommend working on one small, measurable goal. Instead of simply saying, "I will eat better this week," define exactly what you mean: "I will limit myself to two fast food meals per week" or "I will switch from three baked desserts per week to fresh fruit instead." Continue with this goal for a few weeks and see how you do.

Keep going, and come up with another specific goal. If you find yourself struggling, however, consider changing your goal to something smaller and more accomplishable. Some people find doing this with friends provides good social support, so get together a group of buddies and work toward better eating habits. Eating healthily – taking on strategies such as staying within a certain calorie limit, consuming fresh fruits and vegetables, and avoiding processed, sugary treats — can do wonders for your health.

Exercise. We all know we should move around a lot more, but doing it can be difficult, especially in the winter. Again, come up with specific, small goals. Instead of saying, "I should work out more!" say instead, "Every day, I will walk for 20 minutes during my lunch hour." Has the cold stopped your workout routine in its tracks? Don't get bogged down, get creative! Indoor malls are a great place to walk around and stay warm at the same time.

Every doctor you see should tell you to continue working on eating healthy and getting a lot of exercise. For some diseases, these lifestyle choices are as effective as medications. Health starts from within, with one small goal at a time.



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Alpha House is home to kids and families needing shelter

by Laurie Lounsbury
Editor

"Everybody hears about homelessness, but you don't hear about homeless kids," said Nicole Adelman, Executive Director of Alpha House in Ann Arbor. "Most people just don't think about it."

Adelman is one person who thinks about homeless kids all the time. At Alpha House, homeless kids and their parents receive shelter, food and assistance to find permanent housing and employment for the parents. Adelman has been the director of Alpha House since February of 2011. She's no stranger to working with kids, having been an educator at Planned Parenthood for several years before coming to Alpha House.

"Homeless kids and their families can stay here for up to 90 days while we try to get them housed," Adelman said. "The state wants us to restrict their stay here to 30 days, which is really hard to do."

Surrounded by tall pines, hardwoods and playgrounds, Alpha House is the building donated by St. Joseph Mercy Health System to assist homeless families. The nonprofit organization called Interfaith Hospitality Network (IHN) of Washtenaw County handles the operations at Alpha House.

Started in 1992, IHN was originally a rotating shelter system provided by churches and synagogues in the county. Today, the IHN shelter at Alpha House has six family rooms, a shared playroom, living room, family room, dining room, kitchenette and playground. They provide shelter for six families at a time, up to a maximum of 24 people. Families are able to stay at the shelter for up to 90 days, and then receive home-based, follow-up services for twelve months or more after leaving Alpha House.

Food and supplies are donated on a daily basis by over 40 congregations. Volunteers from the congregations take turns staying overnight at Alpha House

with the families. The small staff of eight part-time and eight full-time members at Alpha House couldn't possibly manage without the network of volunteers and donations.

"It's amazing," Adelman said. "We get help from so many organizations, like the Girl Scouts, service groups, congregations and random individuals."

Volunteers also take care of kids from 7 to 8 p.m. so parents can get some down time of their own.

Frequently the families at Alpha House are comprised of a single mom with kids, facing the challenges of getting daycare for kids and transportation to work. One woman staying at the house rose at 3 a.m. every day to catch the bus with her kids to get them to day care, and then she took public transit to a factory job 50 miles away.

Families come to Alpha House after living in their cars or tents at campgrounds. "Cars are a common place to live if they have nowhere else to go," Adelman said.

Fortunately for children living at Alpha House, the school districts in Washtenaw County make accommodations for kids to continue to attend their school of origin by arranging transportation to and from Alpha House.

Alpha House depends largely on charitable contributions, but a recent change in Michigan State Law may discourage people from giving generously in the future. On December 31, 2011, the Michigan Income tax credit will no longer allow people to deduct half of their donation to nonprofits that provide food and shelter.

"We hope people will take advantage of this month to make donations and still be able to claim them on their taxes," Adelman said.

Other donations that are always



From left: Wenoka Johnson, Office Manager; Latania Fair, Shelter Coordinator; Nicole Adelman, Executive Director; and Kelly Pearson, UM MSW Intern in front of Alpha House on Jackson Road.

welcome at Alpha House are children's books and toys, suitable for kids ranging in age from newborn to teen.

Another way to contribute to Alpha

House is by joining a work group, whose efforts include tasks like raking leaves and painting rooms. Learn more at: <http://www.alphahouse-ihn.org>

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While Groundcover News is a nonprofit organization and newspaper vendors are considered contracted self-employers, we still have expectations of how vendors should conduct themselves while selling and representing the paper.

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ACROSS

- Den
- Cover
- General Bradley
- Decorative border
- Baseball's Henry
- Graphic trademark
- Steinbeck novel, *The Winter of Our* _____
- Fashion designer Saint Laurent
- Best possible
- Singer who rose to fame in the 1980s
- High plateau
- Man's nickname
- Comedic actor Torn
- 1968 movie, _____ *Winter*
- Edge formed by adjoining surfaces
- Vied for office
- Woman's name
- Land measurements
- Boutique in Paris or Beverly Hills
- Radiant
- Offspring
- Cook's garb
- Blood components
- Unrefined metal
- Georgia county
- Winter _____: snow sports competition
- Japanese coin
- New Zealand bird
- Notice
- Actress Lanchester
- Implant
- German car manufacturer
- Christmas standard, "Winter _____"
- Fast food magnate
- Electronic communication
- Norse literature
- Ireland
- Jacket part
- European heater manufacturer

DOWN

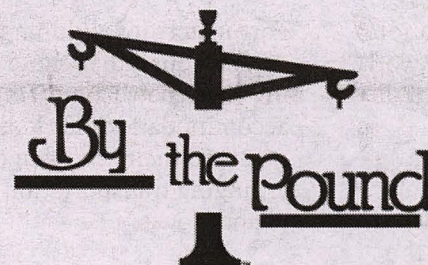
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- Like a desert
- Dutch singer DeLange
- Type of election
- Quarterback Marino
- Mild expletive
- For a circle, πr^2
- Body of water
- Go on stage
- Quadrennial event, Winter _____
- Transport
- Middle _____
- Civil rights pioneer Parks
- Fatty acid
- Dept. of Commerce agency (abbr.)
- Lyricist Gershwin
- Tire surface
- One of a famous acting family
- January (Spanish)
- 1980s sitcom, _____ *Court*
- Worse
- Actress Watts
- Slobber
- Japanese elder
- City in Germany
- Annual occurrence, winter _____

"Winter"

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- Diluted
- Comedian Louis
- Guide
- Fictional prince
- Staircase part
- Purpose
- Asian bread
- Aroma
- _____ Linda, California
- Clothing fastener
- _____ Inlet, Antarctica
- Asked
- Odds and _____
- June 6, 1944
- Building wing

Puzzle by Jeff Richmond



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by Destiny Brown

Dedicated to: Cornell Brown Jr., my li'l bro

Two months confined
Thanks all to momma

Poor li'l brother hurt by the drama
Beaten so much so many times
That he couldn't live in pain so he ran away

Tried to run and hide from life's demons as much as he could
But things just don't turn out like they should

He's follow'n after me his big sis
Things aint look'n good though if they're turn'n out like this

All we ever wanted was to be loved and be treated fair
have a real mom who was always there
and wasn't always fake and one who just cared

Is it too much to ask god
Can momma get what she deserves with a similar rod
Like one she let her man threaten and beat us with
Or maybe u could give a slight eye opener to cops what started this

Jehovah Ropha*

by Gina Reed

When I seek my own way, it clouds my vision.

I am a work in progress which means I can be a "piece of work" at times.

Jehovah Ropha, what a glorious honor your healing presence brings

for I know you will arise with healing in your wings.

During turbulent times when my faith is shaken,

I fly solo with you, I am not forsaken.

Lord, you are the navigator when my visibility is poor.

You make my direction clear and cause my spirit to soar.

* the Lord that heals



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10:00 am ~ Church School

Upcoming Events:

December 3 ~ Saturday Worship, Carol Sing, Potluck
5:00 pm coffee ~ 5:30 pm service
December 16 ~ Parking Lot Pretzel Sale (noon to 4:00 pm)
December 18 ~ Organ Concert by Geoff Stanton ~ 4:00 pm
December 21 ~ "Longest Night Service" ~ 7:00 pm
December 23 ~ Office Closed
December 24 ~ Christmas Eve Services
(5:00 pm ~ 7:30pm ~ 11:00 pm)
December 25 ~ one worship service at 10:00 am
December 26 ~ Office Closed

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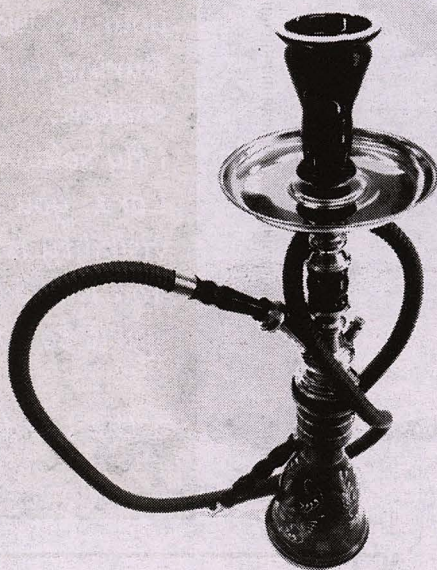
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Loving and lamenting the Great Lakes: artists, scholars share views



by **Andrew Nixon**
Groundcover
Contributor

"We lived in Indian summer and mistook it for spring."
— Bruce Catton, *American historian and Michigan native*

The uncertain future of the Great Lakes – places of great natural beauty and bounty that have nonetheless become seriously imperiled by the relentless and often reckless advances of human activity – was the topic of discussion at a multi-disciplinary conference held at the University of Michigan's Kelsey Museum of Archeology on November 4.

The event, entitled "The Great Lakes: Love Song and Lament," brought together individuals from an unlikely array of fields, from historians to poets to activists. Though coming from diverse backgrounds, conference participants were united in spirit by concern for the ecological and economic

integrity of the Great Lakes region.

The five Great Lakes – Michigan, Superior, Huron, Erie, and Ontario – make up our planet's largest freshwater system, and contain almost one-quarter of the world's available freshwater supply. The Great Lakes basin is home for thousands of species, including 130 species classified as rare or endangered – and nearly half of those found nowhere else on Earth. The economic impact of the water system, too, is as enormous as the water bodies themselves: according to a recent study by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, more than 1.5 million jobs are directly connected to the Great Lakes, generating \$62 billion in wages and 27 percent of the total U.S. gross domestic product. Clearly, the health of the Great Lakes is vital to our nation's economic security.

But the Great Lakes ecosystem faces serious threats on a number of fronts, from proposals to divert water from the basin to the introduction of non-native invasive species and

airborne toxic pollutants into the ecosystem.

The Michigan Quarterly Review (MQR), a literary journal of the University of Michigan and conference host, also devoted a special issue in August to the topic, observing in its introduction, "We don't have to think about the lakes very much or explore them very deeply before we are confronted by the devastation of what we have done to them."

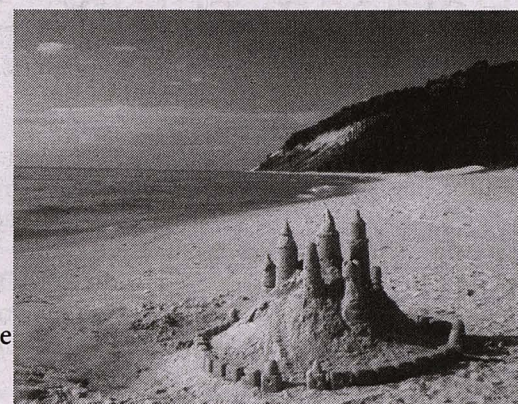
The conference featured a keynote address by environmental writer and Michigan native Jerry Dennis, author of the noted 2003 book, *The Living Great Lakes: Searching for the Heart of the Inland Seas*. Other speakers included poet and environmental activist Alison Swan, ecologist Paul Webb and historian Philip Deloria of the University of Michigan, and U-M professor emeritus of English John Knott. Each of the event's proceedings, which ranged from poetry readings to explorations of shifting cultural perceptions of nature and changing land use, offered

a perspective on the Great Lakes in the bittersweet context of the present historical moment – an uncertain moment when much that is cherished is in real danger of being lost, but still may be saved.

About fifty people attended the free public event. Attendees were invited to join the discussion during Q&A sessions and at the informal social hour which concluded the schedule.

After the conference, Keith Taylor, Associate Editor of MQR, and Director of Undergraduate Creative Writing at the U-M, reflected on the event's significance.

"When you do these kinds of things – you bring different kinds of people together who don't usually get together – nobody knows what to say. But I think it's important that



Sand castle on the shores of Sleeping Bear Sand Dunes (Photo credit: United States Environmental Protection Agency Great Lakes National Program)

it happens. You put scientists together with artists, and artists together with literary scholars, and all of them together with people who are working in environmental advocacy. And I keep thinking that for some reason it's useful."

Select readings from the conference, information on how to obtain a copy of the special issue of MQR on which the conference was based, and photos of the Great Lakes basin captured by local artists, can be found online at: www.michiganquarterlyreview.com/greatlakes

Enjoy the city and county parks on a crisp winter day

by **Leonore Gerstein**
Groundcover Contributor

December is a good time to thumb our noses at the weather and plan some outdoor fun. It's easy to do, thanks to Ann Arbor's Parks and Recreation's many sites. We have indoor pools, skating rinks, and parks of all sizes that are fun to explore all year round.

Why bother with parks? When

was the last time you have strolled under trees in one of Ann Arbor's many well-tended open spaces in fall and winter? Even when there is almost no green in sight, the parks are restful and reinvigorating.

Crisp air, the sky seen through lacy branches, ice floes and the odd brave bird on waterways; the sounds of breezes, wildlife, even silence; all invite us to daydream, appreciate our

senses and let go of the blues. Check the library for park maps and more information. Let's get out there!

Buses to Some Popular Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti Parks and Recreation Sites

Route numbers, departing from and to Downtown Blake Transit Center

• Gallup Park: Buses 3, 22

- Veteran's Park: Buses 12 A and B, 9, 609; Indoor skating; Adults \$5, youth and seniors \$4. For more information, call 794-6235.)
- Ypsilanti Recreation Park: Bus 6
- Cobblestone Farm: Bus 7
- Buhr Park: Bus 7 Outdoor Ice Arena; Adults \$5, youth and seniors \$4. Info: 794-6234
- County Farm Park: Buses 4, 14

- Mack School: Indoor Pool; Bus 12 Adults \$4, youth and seniors \$3.50. Info: 794-6237.
- Nichols Arboretum: Buses 1U, 2, 3, 4, 14, 609
- Leslie Science Center: Bus 2, get off at Barton Rd, cross Plymouth; go one block to Traver Rd, turn right to 1831 Traver. Nature trails and Critter House. Info: 997-1553

CRYPTOQUOTE

Solution

"A person however learned and qualified in his life's work in whom gratitude is absent, is devoid of that beauty of character which makes personality fragrant."

— Hazrat Inayat Khan

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Heirloom cuisine and rogue mixology are signature items at the Ravens Club

by Laurie Lounsbury
Editor

On your first visit to the Raven's Club, you'll find yourself mesmerized by the muddling, then seduced by the swizzle. And then you'll become a devotee of the hand-crafted cocktail, a long-lost art that is being brought back to life at the Raven's Club by bartenders Zack Zavisa and Christian Hetter.

At the former location of the Full Moon on Main Street, something old is becoming something new, thanks to the creativity and inventiveness of owners Jeff Paquin and Chris Pawlicki, along with renowned chef Dan Vernia. The words on the front door give an indication of what you'll find inside: "Heirloom Cuisine and Rogue Mixology."

The rogueness of the mixology comes from Zavisa and Hetter, dedicated bartenders who take classic old drink recipes and add their own touch to the mix.

"There's a lot that's cool with the old recipes, but it's fun to mix it up with new ingredients," Hetter said.

Creating hand-crafted cocktails is more than an art, it's a movement, according to Zavisa. Establishments that promote fresh, local ingredients are moving away from flavored vodkas and prefabricated sugary drinks.

"We don't do Jagerbombs and Cherry-Berry Pucker," Zack said. "We make our own simple syrups with seasonal ingredients, like sweet potato syrup and pumpkin syrup." They also make an outstanding ginger beer, used in their version of the famous Bermudian cocktail, *Dark and Stormy*.

A drink menu boasts some of the famous concoctions of the prohibition era, along with new cocktails invented by Zack and Christian.

Paired with carefully crafted cocktails from a bygone era is the heirloom cuisine prepared by chef Dan Vernia.

Paquin and Vernia were destined to work together after a very auspicious

meeting at the Clements Library at the University of Michigan, where Dan is a licensed researcher.

"Dan was in there researching menus from the late 1800s, and I was there studying hand-crafted cocktails from the same era," Paquin said.

Striving to use locally grown, fresh ingredients, Vernia pairs Michigan greens and grains with unexpected game from other locations. The Antelope Ragout is one of the more popular menu items, featuring antelope from Texas prepared with poblano peppers, balsamic vinegar and chocolate.

Providing the perfect setting for the food and beverages from the Roaring Twenties is the warm, intimate decor featuring bar-mounted lamps, exposed brick walls and oversized floor lamps anchoring both sides of the stand-up bar.

An establishment focusing on great concepts from a bygone era wouldn't be complete without music, so The Ravens Club features popular jazz of the Ron Brooks Trio on Wednesday evenings.

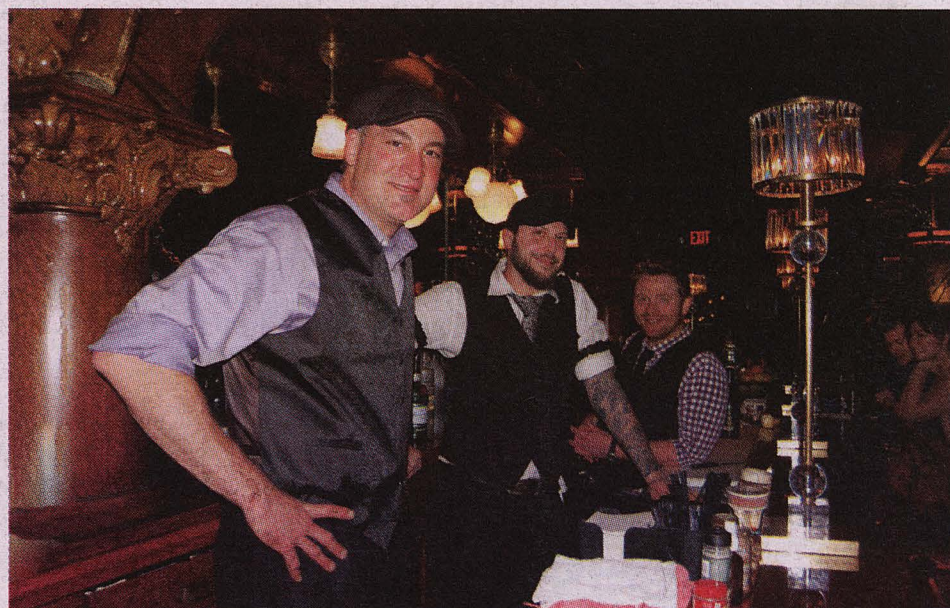
A recent addition to the club's music scene is the Tuesday night local musician showcase. On a recent Tuesday evening, several of the Macpodz played their unique style of jamband music with Brennan Andes on bass, driving the rhythm.

While the Ravens Club typically attracts Ann Arbor's more mature "foodies" and not the younger college crowd, it is building a following of younger people searching for a new experience.

"I haven't heard of half the things on the menu, but I like to try them," said Amanda, a twenty-something patron of the club.

After opening May 13, 2011, The Ravens Club is quickly becoming a hit among the adventurous drinkers and diners.

"At first, customers were taken



Above: Managing partner Jeff Paquin with head bartenders Zack Zavisa and Christian Hetter behind the bar at The Ravens Club; Left, Zavisa creating a "shaken, not stirred" cocktail and Hetter straining the pulp for a fresh juice drink.

aback by what we're doing, but now more places are doing hand-crafted cocktails and so people are more conscious of the movement," Zavisa said.

"People have to wait five or 10 minutes to get their drink, but they're finding it's well worth the wait."

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